VISIT…

FAIT ACCOMPLI

A Short Adventure for Four 12th-Level Player Characters

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At its most basic level of use, *Fate Accompli* is a straightforward quest to clear a dungeon and slay some dragons in an arctic climate. However, it also includes political elements that you may either may play down or use to expand the scenario into a mini-campaign, as you wish.

Fait Accompli is a short adventure for four 12th-level characters. It is set in the wilderness north of a minor border barony that has at best an arms-length relationship with any larger nation. Though the adventure requires all these elements to work, it can be set on the outer edge of any kingdom near an arctic region. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*—plus the *Draconomicon*—to run this adventure. While *Frostburn* is not required, you may wish to use its rules for adventuring in cold climates and perhaps even add some encounters from it to expand the adventure. *Fait Accompli* utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules.

To get started, print out the adventure, including the map. Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations).

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The small barony of Icenvale is located in the far north, on the edge of an arctic wilderness. The area is rich in natural resources—particularly furs, fish, and iron ore—but the harsh conditions make capitalizing on this wealth difficult at best. Thus, the barony's exports are low and its economy is weak. Since most of Icenvale's residents are content just to survive the six-month winters, they give little thought to events beyond their own borders. But they are a sturdy, hard-working people, and their respect for tradition is as great as their respect for law.

One reason that Icenvale has stayed out of the local political arena is that it lacks an official ruler. A white dragon named Hinterbite slew the last baron of Icenvale more than three hundred years ago and stole his symbol of authority—a *rod of rulership*. By Icenvale law, an heir to the title must have that specific rod (not

some copy or replacement) to take power. Though the baron's heirs certainly did not lack the drive and the capability to take on the dragon and recover the rod, an ancient prophecy states that should the ruling family ever lose it, only outsiders—that is, folk not of Icenvale heritage—can recover it. Any Icenvale resident who participates in such a venture is doomed to die before it ends. This odd combination of ancient law and prophecy has thus far kept any of the baron's heirs from assuming control.

Though the law and the prophecy were in place well before the old baron's death, certain power-hungry citizens have used them to orchestrate the current situation. Hinterbite's attack on the baron was aided and abetted by a member of the Bardic Guild, who lured the baron into the wilderness on a false mission to rescue an ice fairy, then ensured that the dragon took the rod so that Icenvale would be rulerless. A Guild Council made up of local master crafters and artists then stepped into the void and quietly took control. For the past three hundred years, this council has made most of Icenvale's ruling decisions. Though it has no official power, most citizens accept it as a ruling body in the absence of a true ruler.

Over time, the Guild Council has become more and more corrupt, particularly when it comes to fiscal matters. Although the council collects taxes, it does very little spending. The citizens' requests for improved roads, more guards, or public services are met with the universal answer that the council is not empowered to order improvements—only a new baron can do so. Thus, the tax money goes directly into the pockets of the council members, leaving them significantly better off than the citizens they claim to represent.

The members of the Guild Council do all they can to make sure that the local populace remembers the law and the tradition that have kept Icenvale rulerless for so long. In particular, the Bardic Guild has taken great pains to ensure that no heir to the throne ever tries to change the law or bring in anyone to recover the rod. They have managed to convince the citizenry that the prophecy requires recovery of the rod by an outsider who undertakes the mission for reasons of his own, with neither a request from the heir nor a promise of remuneration. The prophecy actually makes no such requirement, but everyone except the Bardic Guild now thinks it does. In addition, the Guild Council provides regular offerings of food and tribute to Hinterbite, who still lives in the nearby mountains, to ensure his continued cooperation.

Orielle Bladeworthy, a well-liked young paladin, is currently the only legal heir to the baron's throne. Like her predecessors, however, she cannot take power because she does not have the rod. Though she has toyed with the idea of ignoring the prophecy and setting off to recover the rod herself, the citizens have thus far dissuaded her from doing so because her death would mean that Icenvale could never again have a ruler of the true blood.

However, the situation in Frosthaven, capital of Icenvale, is becoming increasingly unstable. Orielle has accepted the fact that she may never be able to rule, but she has recently begun pushing to make the barony a republic and place the political power in the hands of the citizens. So far, she has gained little support for the idea, but her efforts (as well as the heroic actions she has taken in defense of Icenvale) have made her very popular with her people.

Meanwhile, Hinterbite has grown older and larger, taken a mate, and produced a brood of young. Though his mate died fighting a group of adventurers, the youngsters have grown strong and cruel. The four young dragons and their father have begun raiding larger and larger areas, and even the Guild Council can't come up with enough tribute to keep them all happy. Orielle has announced her intention to kill the dragons in order to save her people, and only a vast public outcry has thus far prevented her from making the attempt. Thus, she is currently in search of heroes to undertake the task on her behalf.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Upon arriving in Frosthaven, the characters encounter Orielle engaged in an argument with the leader of the Guild Council. From this conversation, they learn of the current situation in Icenvale. If they agree to take on Hinterbite, they must ascend to the dragons' lair—a cavern complex connecting with Karrack, the old baron's now-abandoned keep in the mountains. A magical blizzard makes the journey difficult, as do the winter wolves that lair nearby. After fighting their way past the frost giants who guard the remains of Karrack, they must enter the connecting cavern complex and defeat first the four young adult dragons, then Hinterbite himself.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As DM, you know best how to involve your PCs in an adventure. If you need ideas for connecting the adventure to their activities, however, you can use one of the following suggestions to draw them into the action.

- The characters hear about the dragon problem while taking care of other business in a town near Frosthaven.

- A magician from whom a PC has ordered a magic item tells the group that it's unavailable. All such items come from a wizard in the frozen north whose caravans have recently been raided by dragons. (This item should replace some existing treasure in the adventure, since the PCs are likely to retrieve it if they defeat Hinterbite.)

- A coalition of Icenvale natives asks the PCs to get the rod back for Orielle so that she can become baroness.

- A member of the Bardic Guild contacts the PCs and asks them to retrieve the rod. He claims he is acting on behalf of Orielle, though she actually knows nothing about his actions. (The Bardic Guild plans to use the PCs' testimony later as proof that Orielle doesn't respect tradition.)

- Orielle contacts the PCs and asks them to slay the dragons that have been threatening Icenvale. Asking for outside aid in such an enterprise means that she is unlikely to be accepted as baroness because of the Bardic Guild's perversion of the prophecy. However, the party's success in this mission would gain her enough support to make Icenvale a republic at last.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Fait Accompli is primarily a site-based adventure, though it begins with a visit to Frosthaven that may generate several freeform encounters.

A. FROSTHAVEN

Frosthaven is the capital of Icenvale and the seat of its government. The difficulty of extracting the area's rich natural resources combined with the Guild Council's drain on the economy has made the town less prosperous that it otherwise might be.

Frosthaven

Small city; Pop. 6,000

Power Center: Guild Council (NE), Orielle Bladeworthy supporters (NG)

Gold Piece Limit: 15,000 gp

Assets: 4,500,000 gp

A1. AN ICY TOWN (EL 12)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach Frosthaven.

The day is cold and overcast, and a weak drizzle makes the small city of Frosthaven look gray and ugly. Dead weeds stick up through the cobblestones in the road, and most of the stone houses show significant wear. Some have been abandoned, and others have been poorly repaired in spots with cheap materials such as wood and sod. Of the three mills visible against the stream, only one appears to be in good enough repair to function. The people in the streets hurry toward their destinations with their heads down, speaking to no one. Whether they are cold or just disinterested in their surroundings is difficult to judge, but they are clearly more interested in getting back to the warmth of their homes than in greeting one another.

Ahead, beside a broken bridge over a muddy gully, two people are engaged in an argument. One is a well-dressed, portly man with a lute slung over his back. The other is a trim young woman in armor. Though the two have not come to blows, their voices carry through the quiet city streets. Their stances and attitudes suggest that the argument is an old one, and that they have addressed this topic many times before.

The two people are arguing over the condition of the city bridge. The man claims that the Guild Council lacks the authority to repair it. The woman wants to know why the Guild Council is still collecting taxes if it doesn't intend to fix anything.

Creatures: The man is Thaddeus Vorwealker, leader of the Guild Council, and the woman is Orielle Bladeworthy.

Thaddeus Vorwealker: Male human bard 12; CR 12; Medium humanoid; HD 12d6+12; hp 54; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +11 melee (1d8+1/19–20, +1 *longsword*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+1/19–20, +1 *longsword*) or +11 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SQ bardic knowledge +14, bardic music 12/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire competence, inspire courage +2, inspire greatness, song of freedom, *suggestion*); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Balance +3, Bluff +20, Decipher Script +17, Diplomacy +27, Gather Information +20, Intimidate +7, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +17, Perform (sing) +23, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +17, Tumble +16; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Perform [sing]), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Bardic Music: Thaddeus can use bardic music twelve times per day. See the bard class features on page 29 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Countersong (*Su*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to counter magical effects that depend on sound.

Fascinate (*Sp*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to cause one or more creatures to become fascinated with him.

Inspire Competence (*Su*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to help an ally succeed at a task.

Inspire Courage (*Su*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to bolster his allies against fear and improve their combat abilities.

Inspire Greatness (*Su*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to inspire greatness in himself or an ally, granting his target extra fighting capability.

Song of Freedom (*Sp*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to create an effect equivalent to the *break enchantment* spell.

Suggestion (*Sp*): Thaddeus can use music or poetics to make a *suggestion* (as the spell) to a creature that he has already fascinated.

Bard Spells Known (3/5/4/4/3 per day; caster level 12th): 0—*dancing lights, daze* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 15), *light, lullaby* (DC 15), *read magic*; 1st—*cause fear* (DC 16), *charm person* (DC 16), *cure light wounds, sleep* (DC 16); 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, hold person* (DC 17), *invisibility, undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*blink, charm monster* (DC 18), *dispel magic, glibness*; 4th—*dominate person* (DC 19), *hold monster* (DC 19), *shout* (DC 19).

Possessions: +1 longsword, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +2, bracers of armor +3, ring of protection +1, cloak of Charisma +2,* 1,400 gp.

Orielle Bladeworthy: Female human paladin 8; CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 8d10+8; hp 52; Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +8; Grp +10; Atk +12 melee (1d8+3/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +8 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +8/+3 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); SA smite evil 2/day, turn undead 6/day (+3, 2d6+8, 5th); SQ aura of courage, *detect evil,* divine grace, divine health, lay on hands 24/day, *remove disease* 1/week, *special mount* (heavy warhorse; empathic link with mount, share spells with mount), strong aura of good; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +12, Heal +13, Jump –10, Ride +10; Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Smite Evil (Su): Twice per day, Orielle may attempt to smite evil with one normal melee attack. She adds +3 to her attack roll and deals an extra 8 points of damage.

Remove Disease (Sp): Orielle can produce a *remove disease* effect, as the spell, once per week.

Aura of Courage (Su): Orielle is immune to fear, and each ally within 10 feet of her gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against fear effects.

Detect Evil (Sp): Orielle can use *detect evil* at will as the spell.

Divine Health (Ex): Orielle is immune to disease.

Special Mount (Sp): Once per day for up to 16 hours, Orielle can call upon her heavy warhorse as a full-round action. The creature's abilities and characteristics are summarized below.

Orielle's Warhorse: Male heavy warhorse; CR 8; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 8d8+24; hp 60; Init +1; Spd 60 ft.; AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk +11 melee (1d6+5, hoof); Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+5, 2 hooves) and +5 melee (1d4+2, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ improved evasion, improved speed, low-light vision, scent; AL LG; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide –8, Jump +12, Listen +7, Spot +6; Endurance, Run, Weapon Focus (hoof).

Improved Evasion (Ex): If Orielle's warhorse is exposed to any effect that normally allows him to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, he takes no damage with a successful saving throw and half damage if the saving throw fails.

Possessions: Bit and bridle, masterwork banded mail barding, military saddle, saddlebags.

Smite Evil (Su): Twice per day, Orielle may attempt to smite evil with one normal melee attack. She adds +3 to her attack roll and deals an extra 8 points of damage.

Paladin Spells Prepared (caster level 4th): 1st—*bless weapon, divine favor*; 2nd—*bull's strength.*

Possessions: +1 full plate armor, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 longsword, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, silver holy symbol, 3,100 gp.

Tactics: Once the PCs get close enough for Thaddeus and Orielle to notice them, the two stop arguing and welcome the newcomers. They introduce themselves and answer any questions the PCs may have that do not relate to their argument. If one of them has invited the PCs here, that person offers to escort them to a place where they can talk privately (see Development, below). If neither has asked them here and the characters inquire about the argument, Thaddeus and

Orielle each offer to take them somewhere warmer and explain the local situation. The PCs are free to accept either invitation, but not both. As soon as anyone agrees to go with either NPC, the other leaves to deal with some other problem.

If a fight breaks out, both defend themselves to the best of their ability.

Development: Either Thaddeus or Orielle can explain the history of the rod, the perils of the nearby mountains, and the odd qualities of Karrack, the castle where the last baron died at the jaws of Hinterbite.

If Orielle invited the characters to Frosthaven, she offers to take them to her home. If they accept, she explains the current situation and details her concerns. She doesn't care whether she becomes baroness or not, but she feels that the dragons have become too great a threat to ignore. Orielle would like to go with the party and help slay the dragons, but her sword arm has been Icenvale's best defense against raiding frost giants for some time, and ensuring the safety of Icenvale and its people is her foremost concern.

Though Orielle knows that the Guild Council spreads rumors about her and she suspects corruption in its ranks, she refuses to act against its members without clear evidence of evil intent. The Guild Council is as close to a ruling body as her people have, and she knows that some authority is needed here. The council members may be greedy, but Orielle is convinced that she would know if any of them were truly evil because of her *detect evil* ability. (In fact, most of them are just weak-willed, but Thaddeus is truly evil. He has thus far been able to operate right under Orielle's nose, however, because he never allows his *undetectable alignment* spell to lapse.)

If Thaddeus has been expecting the PCs, he whisks them away from Orielle as quickly as possible, citing a need to discuss "official business" with the newcomers. Once he has taken them to his home and offered them refreshment, he does his best to paint Orielle as a dreaming idealist. He claims that she doesn't understand how poor Icenvale really is, and that the dragons she is so concerned about don't pose any real danger to the barony. Thaddeus hopes to make the PCs discount Orielle's reasoning and leave them as unprepared as possible for the fury of Hinterbite. If asked about his relative wealth, he notes that his family is independently wealthy and pays more than its fair share of taxes. (In fact, he pockets his share of the tax money and pays no taxes at all himself, but he does his best to make the lie seem believable.)

Questioning the townsfolk reveals that most people think the Guild Council is inefficient, but not criminal. However, almost everyone in town believes that Orielle would make a better ruler and hopes that some outsider will come to retrieve the *rod of rulership*.

When the PCs are ready to seek out the dragons, go to section B.

B. JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAINS

The area north of town is quite dangerous because of the magical snowstorms that prevail there for six months out of every year. The constant blizzards are the result of an old magical effect placed here ages ago to protect Frosthaven from attack.

B1. UP THE VALE

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs set off for the dragons' lair.

> Just north of town, a heavy blizzard rages. Visibility is less than 10 feet, and the driving winds howl constantly. Snow pelts down with a fury, drifting as high as 12 feet in many places. But rather than falling from the sky, the snow seems to be flowing constantly down from a distant mountain, like a vast, white waterfall that stretches for miles.
>
> Despite the wind, however, the storm does not seem to be moving. Furthermore, short breaks in the swirling snow reveal a deep valley cutting through the ground toward the mountain, and this depression seems to be completely free of snow.

The storm effect covers the 20-mile distance from Frosthaven to Karrack, and it is about 40 miles wide. The people of Icenvale accept the six-month-long blizzard in this area as part of their environment and have learned to bypass it by taking the valley road (see B1a: Alternate Route, below).

Characters attempting to move overland through the blizzard must deal with the full extent of its hazards (see Blizzard on page 94 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). In addition to the normal hazards, moving at more than one-quarter speed requires a successful DC 15 Reflex save to avoid falling. This magical blizzard doesn't stop until the first day of spring.

B1a. Alternate Route

Characters can avoid the driving snow streaming off the mountain by taking an alternate route to Karrack. A narrow valley runs from the edge of the nearby forest up to the base of the mountain. The wind blows very lightly in the valley, and though the conditions there are not springlike by any means, the snow on the 30-foot-wide valley floor is lightly packed and easy to move across. The valley's rocky walls are 40 feet high, and although they are not free of snow and ice, they are

studded with ledges and ramps that make movement relatively easy. No Climb check is required to ascend a wall as long as a character moves as far horizontally as he does vertically. Any greater rate of ascension requires a DC 10 Climb check. The valley is 20 miles long and covers most of the distance from Frosthaven to Karrack.

If the PCs opt for this route, go to encounter B2. Otherwise, go to encounter C when they reach Karrack.

B2. PREY (EL 12)

Read or paraphrase the following one or two hours after the PCs enter the valley.

> The driving wind whistles above the relatively peaceful, snow-covered valley. The grey stone of the rocky walls stretches on for miles, dotted regularly with icy patches and snowdrifts. Although the snow here is minimal, the air has a definite wintry chill.

A large pack of winter wolves has claimed this valley as its primary hunting ground. During the winter months, the wolves find ample food here in the form of creatures driven into the valley by the blizzard outside. Near the forest end of the valley, one of the wolves hides and sniffs the slow wind for prey. The winter wolves become aware of the PCs within an hour or two of their entry into the valley and mass to attack.

A character with the Track feat may attempt a DC 20 Survival check to spot the signs of previous wolf attacks before the winter wolves reveal themselves. Hoofprints and pawprints combined with old bloodstains reveal that unusually large wolves have taken down deer, bears, and even dire wolves within the valley walls. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the tracks as those of winter wolves.

Creatures: A dozen winter wolves lair within this valley, picking off creatures that opt for the easy route past the blizzard.

Winter Wolves (12): 62, 60, 58, 56, 55, 54, 53, 52, 50, 48, 46, 44; see *Monster Manual*, page 256.

Tactics: The wolves can use their scent ability and Track feat to follow a foe for some time without putting themselves in the enemy's line of sight. Furthermore, their relatively high Intelligence scores let them use the information they have gathered about potential prey to set up an ambush. The ability to track prey at a distance combined with a decent Hide bonus in wintry environs (+6 total) gives the pack a fair chance of surprising foes.

If a single scout is moving well ahead of the party, the wolves attempt to ambush and kill that character before the rest of the party arrives. Even a scout who is not surprised is unlikely to prevail against the entire pack single-handedly, and unless she has a ready means of escape, the pack can probably overtake her easily if she tries to flee, given the wolves' speed.

If the party has no scout, the wolves try to ambush the entire group if it seems likely that they can achieve surprise. Otherwise, they wait until their targets set up camp, so as to catch at least some of the PCs asleep.

When they spring their attack, the winter wolves employ standard pack tactics. The wolves pick two targets on which to concentrate their attacks, taking advantage of their superior speed to cut off avenues of retreat and gain flanking bonuses. During the first round of combat, they focus their breath weapons on a single area and direct as much damage as possible at a single foe. Since each successful bite attack is also a trip attack, the wolves can bring down a foe to gain additional bonuses on their melee attack rolls as well as attacks of opportunity if the opponent tries to stand up again.

Any winter wolf that is weakened, near death, or operating under a significant penalty cycles out of the attack pattern, allowing a healthy wolf to replace him. Wolves that can no longer face foes in direct combat look for stragglers to attack and generally harry the party to ensure that no archer or spellcaster is left free to pick off his brethren.

Since the attack occurs in a deep valley, the wolves have a few options that are usable even against flying foes. They can easily run up the sides of the valley (no Climb check required) to gain more favorable attack positions that let them breathe or jump on foes from a height of up to 40 feet. Breathing is safer, but the wolves do not hesitate to jump at a dangerous flying target and attempt to bring it down (+12 Jump modifier due to Strength and move rate). A leaping wolf can bring down a foe with a successful trip attack if it hits with a bite.

Development: If more than half the wolves die, the survivors flee up the walls of the valley and escape into the blizzard, provided that they can do so without exposing themselves to further attack. They can be tracked back to their forest lair with a successful Survival check (DC 25 for soft ground, snow since the tracks were made, Large creatures, and poor visibility, –1 for every three surviving wolves). If attacked in their lair, the wolves fight to the death.

Treasure: The wolves carry no treasure while hunting. Their lair contains the frozen, tattered bodies of several previous victims. Scattered among the broken shields, rusted weapons, and ripped armor are 415 gp, 316 sp, and 729 cp. Also hidden in the debris are a bolt of cloth-of-gold (30 yards, worth 500 gp) and a wizard's spellbook that contains *analyze dweomer* and *mass bull's strength*.

C. KARRACK

Once the seat of the old baron's power, Karrack is now the lair of some frost giants and their dragon lords. The builders of Karrack ensured that the stronghold would be safe from any force by building it twice—once on the Material Plane in a cave, and a second time on the Ethereal Plane, using its native rock. Thus, the walls of the keep and the gates that protect its main entrance exist in both planes. When viewed from the Ethereal Plane, Karrack looks like a castle front built into a floating rock—namely, the massive mountain.

Though the two structures occupy the same space in their respective home planes, they are not directly connected. Thus, destroying a wall in the Ethereal Plane has no effect on the corresponding wall on the Material Plane. Furthermore, the walls in the Ethereal Plane have no doors except for the main gate, which exists on both planes. Thus, a character who becomes ethereal inside one of Karrack's rooms finds himself in a windowless, doorless version of the same room on the Ethereal Plane.

A powerful spell (caster level 24th for the purpose of *dispel magic* and similar effects) binds the ethereal version of Karrack to the same location as the material version. Even if that protective magic is dispelled, the ethereal version of Karrack drifts very slowly in its own plane and continues to serve as an effective barrier against ethereal marauders for as much as a month afterward.

The magic binding the two fortifications together creates a powerful distortion in the fabric of magic nearby. As a result, *teleport* and any similar spells (including *teleport other* and *greater teleport*) do not work within the castle or the mountain connected to it. Any character attempting to teleport into Karrack ends up just outside, generally in front of the main gate.

Although a map is provided for Karrack, you could easily adapt any castle layout you wish to use for the fortress, since little of the action takes place here. The majority of the Karrack map is not keyed because the only action relevant to the adventure occurs in the main hall next to the front gate. The upper floors are intact, but the path from the front doors to the spiral staircase shows signs of heavy traffic, and the back of the staircase has been smashed open, revealing the lair of the young dragons (area C5).

All of Karrack is cold and empty. No rugs or tapestries grace its floors and walls, and the furniture is old and tattered. If the PCs succeed in their quest and actually acquire the use of Karrack (see Further Adventures), you as DM must decide its size and state of disrepair based on the needs of your campaign.

All ceilings within the keep are 20 feet high.

C1. GREAT HALL (EL 11)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs approach Karrack.

> Karrack looms just ahead, silent and frozen. A vast, open field leads up to a massive set of gates that jut from the rock of the mountain itself. Neither an alternate entrance nor any cover is apparent.

Once the PCs come within 240 feet of Karrack, the blizzard dies down to a heavy but not impairing snowfall. The face of the fortress sticks out from the side of the mountain, and a broad, open path leads up to it. No trees, rocks, or other features provide any cover from the castle's defenders.

Creatures: Within the great hall of Karrack dwell two frost giants, Ulf and Yeager, who serve as the dragons' guard-dogs. Though they are not physically bound or restrained, the giants are nevertheless prisoners here. They use some old rugs as beds, but they have long ago burned the room's other furnishings as fuel.

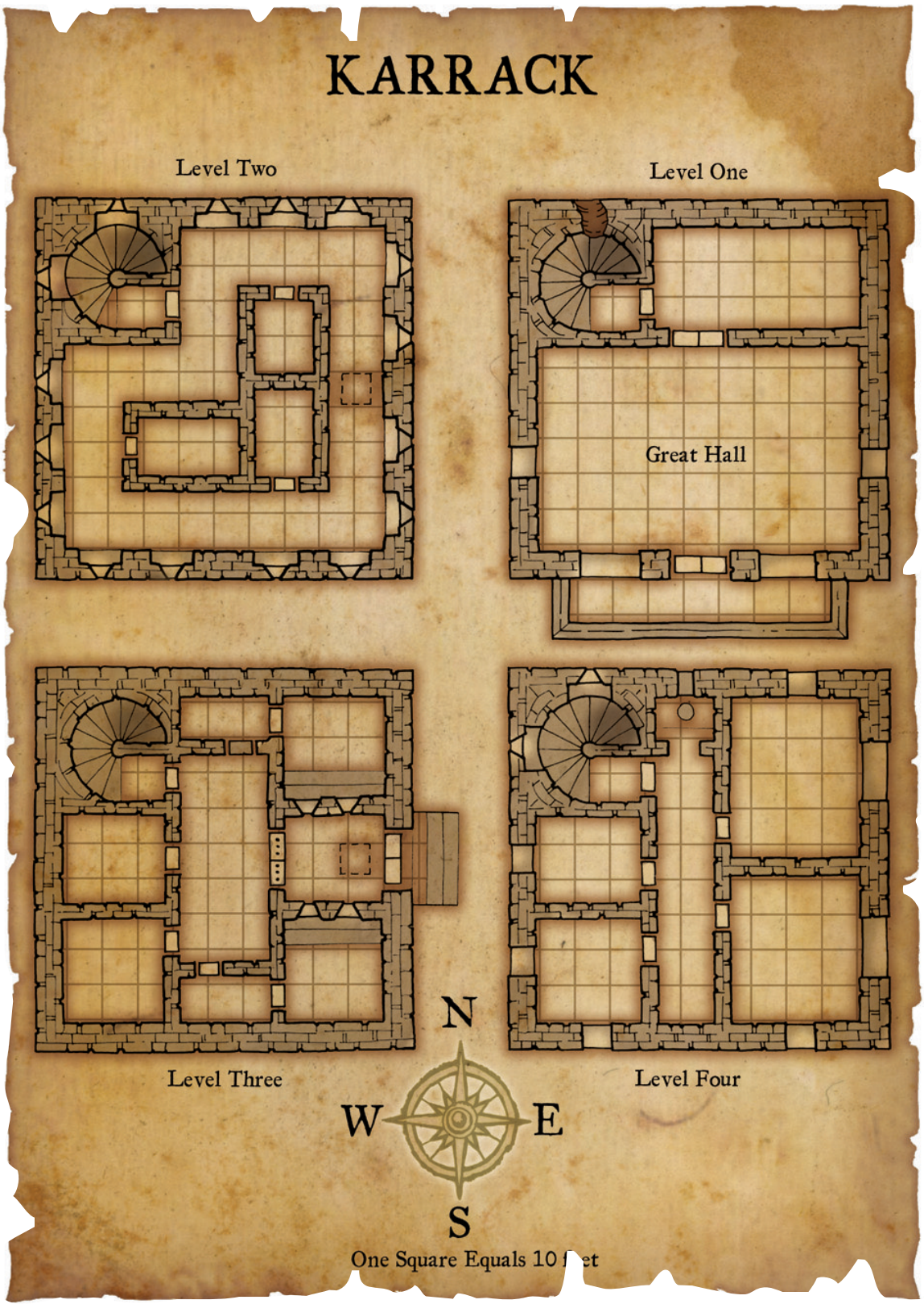
About five years ago, the giants heard about some young white dragons raiding the local area. Ulf and Yeager came to capture one to raise as a guard for their clan, which has a keep farther to the north. But they did not know that the youngsters had a parent still living with them, and Hinterbite proved to be more than a match for the giants all by himself. Hinterbite nearly killed them, but they begged for mercy, and he agreed to let them live if they would serve as his guards for ten years.

Though humiliated by this turn of events, the two giants know that they can't outfight or outrun an adult dragon. Thus, until their term of service is done, they plan to remain faithful if grudging guards unless someone obviously more powerful than Hinterbite comes along.

Frost Giants (2): hp 146 (Ulf), 120 (Yeager); see *Monster Manual*, page 122.

Tactics: As soon as the giants notice the PCs approaching, they take cover behind the main gate and begin hurling rocks. Each giant carries three throwing rocks on his person, and two stacks of rocks (sixty per stack) flank the main gate on the inside.

The giants enter melee only if forced to do so. In that case, they take advantage of their greater reach to keep foes from closing with them for as long as possible, but they don't fall back more than one room. The giants assume that anyone attacking the fortress plans to kill them along with the dragons—especially once blood has been shed—so they fight to the death in most circumstances. However, if the giants are clearly losing, they seize any opportunity the PCs offer them to negotiate or surrender—after all, it is better to risk possible death at Hinterbite's claws than sure death at the hands


KARRACK
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of the PCs. Neither Ulf nor Yeager is willing to face any of the dragons inside the complex, but they are quite happy to describe the five dragons and give the PCs some idea of Karrack's layout in exchange for their lives. They answer any questions truthfully and do not attempt to turn on the PCs if offered quarter.

Development: If the PCs open negotiations with Ulf and Yeager, the giants answer questions truthfully to the best of their ability. If asked whether the dragons ever have visitors or employ spies, the giants mention occasional visitors, including a human male with a cloak that seems to move even when there is no wind. His description matches that of Thaddeus Vorwealker, the leader of Frosthaven's Guild Council. In fact, they report that Thaddeus teleported to Karrack quite recently, arriving just outside the castle, as usual. As far as the giants know, he is still here (assuming that the PCs didn't delay too long in getting here).

Treasure: The frost giants' weapons and armor are not in good repair, and they carry little of any value. Hinterbite took all their valuables and added them to his hoard long ago.

C2–C4. UPPER FLOORS

The upper floors of Karrack are currently unoccupied and bare.

C5. DRAGON LAIR, TAKE ONE (EL 13)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs approach the front cavern of the dragons' lair.

> The wall in this portion of the keep is covered with a thin layer of ice. A huge, jagged hole yawns in the far wall, as though some immense and powerful creature had smashed through it. Mist swirls around the opening as the warmer air mixes with the icy, chill atmosphere beyond it.
>
> A closer look at the opening reveals a large cavern whose walls are entirely covered with cracked, sharp ice. Daggerlike icicles hang from the ceiling, and shattered bits of ice are scattered all over the snow-packed floor. A bitter, chemical smell issues from the cave, carrying with it the scent of blood and death.
>
> At the far end of the cavern, four draconic forms, each the size of a large horse, rise from their snowy bed. Their hides are the color of old ice and bleached bone, and each has a ridged crest that extends down its back. Their bright blue eyes twinkle with malice.

The dragons do not lair in Karrack proper, but they have established a connection between the back wall of the keep and their cavern complex. This front cavern, which measures approximately 150 feet in diameter, is the lair of Hinterbite's four offspring, and it is lined with an assortment of frozen carcasses and treasure. A single, 20-foot-wide tunnel at the back leads to Hinterbite's lair, which is considerably more extensive.

Unlike the rest of Karrack, this area does not have a duplicate set of walls on the Ethereal Plane. It's a natural cavern in the mountain behind Karrack, not part of the fortress itself. Although a character can't move ethereally from any part of the fortress into the caverns, it is possible to move around in the caverns in that form. Since the dragons have blindsense, however, they can still detect an ethereal creature if it comes within their blindsense range and line of sight.

Creatures: Hinterbite's four offspring—Algid, Graupel, Heimal, and Neve—constitute a very difficult encounter. With one barbarian level apiece, they count as CR 9 each. All four together are an EL 13 encounter—one above the designated level of the PCs. Thus, characters who blindly charge into this lair and attempt to kill the dragons by force of arms are very likely to be badly hurt, and at least one death is a distinct possibility. A more cautious group that scouts ahead and develops a plan to deal with the creatures—such as drawing them out one at a time, or waiting until one or two are out of the lair—is much more likely to overcome this threat. Hinterbite does not intervene in a fight between the PCs and his offspring, since he feels that his children should learn to handle themselves adequately in combat.

The four young adult dragons are beginning to chafe under their father's harsh restrictions, but they aren't quite ready to defy him yet. They spend much of their time sulking, squabbling among themselves, and making plans to establish strongholds of their own. Currently, Algid is closest to actually heading out by herself. Graupel has come to enjoy the security of lairing near his father, and he is toying with staying on after his siblings leave. Heimal and Neve are planning to set out together, but they aren't ready to take that leap just yet, and they probably won't do so until they gain at least one more age category.

The four young adult dragons share the same statistics because they were raised together and have the same heritage. However, their personalities and attitudes differ as much as those of any siblings do, so be sure to play up their individual natures as much as possible during the encounter.

Algid, Graupel, Heimal, and Neve: Male or female young adult white dragon barbarian 1; CR 9; Large dragon (cold); HD 16d12+64; hp 168; Init +2; Spd 70 ft., burrow 30 ft., swim 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor);

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +16; Grp +26; Atk +21 melee (2d6+6, bite); Full Atk +21 melee (2d6+6, bite) and +19 melee (1d8+3, 2 claws) and +19 melee (1d6+3, 2 wings) and +19 melee (1d8+9, tail slap); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon (40-ft. cone of cold), frightful presence, spell-like abilities; SQ blindsight 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, fast movement, icewalking, immunities (cold, paralysis, sleep), low-light vision, rage 1/day, spell resistance 16, vulnerability to fire; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +11; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +1, Hide +10, Intimidate +11, Jump +22, Knowledge (history) +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +14, Search +18, Sense Motive +18, Spot +12, Swim +18; Ability Focus (breath weapon), Blind-Fight, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Multiattack, Suppress Weakness*.

Breath Weapon (Su): 40-foot cone, damage 5d6 cold, Reflex DC 23 half.

Frightful Presence (Ex): 150-foot radius, HD 14 or fewer, Will DC 16 negates.

Rage (Ex): Once per day, each dragon can enter a state of fierce rage that lasts for 9 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as it rages: hp 200; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Grp +28; Atk +23 melee (2d6+8, bite); Full Atk +23 melee (2d6+8, bite) and +21 melee (1d8+4, 2 claws) and +21 melee (1d6+4, 2 wings) and +21 melee (1d8+12, tail slap); SV Fort +17, Will +13; Str 27, Con 23; Jump +24, Swim +20. At the end of its rage, the dragon is fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Icewalking (Ex): As the *spider climb* spell, but the surfaces the dragon climbs must be icy. This ability is always in effect.

*This feat is from the Draconomicon.

Possessions: Minor ring of energy resistance (fire),

Tactics: The four young dragons attack as soon as they detect a foe. They have fought together many times before, so they are used to supporting one another in combat. If possible, they open with breath weapons, focusing on unarmored foes because they are likely to be weaker than armored ones. After this initial attack, the dragons try to stagger their breath weapons so that one or two breathe every round. If possible, a dragon in the back breathes while those in front engage the foes in melee combat. Then the dragon who breathed moves up to the front line so that another can fall back and breathe. The dragons do not worry about catching one another in their breath weapons, since they are immune to cold, but they do try to maneuver so that those engaged in melee do not shield the enemies from the frosty breath of their siblings.

The youngsters also take full advantage of their frightful presence. A successful Will save against the frightful presence of one dragon does not grant immunity to the frightful presence of another, so PCs within 150 feet of more than one dragon must make a Will save for each. However, failing more than one save does not have successively worse effects. Thus, a character shaken by the frightful presence of one dragon takes no additional penalties for failing a save against that of another dragon.

The dragons are intelligent combatants who are adept at analyzing which foes present the greatest threat and working to neutralize those first. They avoid being flanked and stay close to one another for support, but never close enough that more than two of them can be caught in the same *fireball*.

The dragons cannot be "cornered" within the cave because their burrow speed allows them to move through the packed snow and ice of the cave walls with ease. Once out of their lair, they become more vulnerable, since they cannot burrow through the solid rock of Karrack itself.

The dragons do not enter their rages lightly or quickly because they fear the result of lowering their ACs, or finding themselves in a fight that lasts longer than the rage, or being unable to use their spell-like abilities because they require concentration. However, a dragon knocked down to 80 or fewer hit points enters a rage on its next action unless it has a compelling reason not to.

If the dragons are facing foes that can employ numerous ranged attacks to great effect, at least one dragon that is not raging uses its *fog cloud* ability to create cover. Although the dragons cannot see through their own *fog clouds*, the combination of blindsense (which allows them to place their breath weapon cones properly) and Blind-Fight (which lets them make decent melee attacks) makes them only slightly less effective when they can't see their opponents.

If the dragons are winning the fight, they pursue any fleeing targets down the mountain. If they cannot kill a particular opponent in melee, they follow that foe until it either leads them to other targets or becomes vulnerable.

If the fight goes against the dragons, they try to flee upon reaching 30 or fewer hit points by flying at top speed away from the fight. If a fleeing dragon is closer to the south exit of the room, it makes its way back to Hinterbite (area C6). A dragon that flees in this manner stays with Hinterbite until healed (a process that probably takes several days), then moves back to this lair. If the dragon is closer to the northern exit, it heads for the outside and does not return. A dragon that flees in this manner is considered defeated, and the PCs gain full experience for it.

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Each dragon has a *minor ring of energy resistance* (*fire*). Since they have all taken the Suppress Weakness feat, each takes fire damage as follows.

1. Apply results of saving throw, if any.

2. Subtract 10 (for the ring) from the total fire damage dealt.

3. Multiply the remainder by 1.25 because of the dragon's fire vulnerability.

Thus, if Algid is caught in a 32-point *fireball* and makes his Reflex save, he takes 7 points of damage (1/2 of 32 is 16 for the save, –10 for the ring leaves 6, times 1.25 for the vulnerability equals 7.5, rounded down).

Treasure: The rest of the dragons' treasure is embedded in a foot or more of ice. Characters can chip it loose by dealing 50 or more points of normal damage or 25 points of fire damage to the icy wall, but any excess fire damage applies to the items. The dragons' shared hoard includes the *four minor rings of energy resistance* (*fire*) that the dragons wear (worth 12,000 gp each), 1,453 gp, 8,762 sp, 18,973 cp, eight pieces of polished malachite (worth 16 gp each), and a full brass dinner set for eight (worth 350 gp).

Development: Once the PCs have dealt with the young dragons, they can proceed to Hinterbite's lair (area C6). Though Hinterbite refuses to interfere in a fight between PCs and his children, his rage is dreadful if he finds out that any of his offspring have died. Should the PCs leave after slaying one or more of the young dragons, Hinterbite sets out to find the lesser creatures that deprived one of his brood of life. Thus, characters hoping to rest between dragon fights had better make sure that none of the young dragons reaches its father, or hide well in the caverns, or flee far enough away that Hinterbite can't track them down. A cunning party could, however, use Hinterbite's lust for vengeance to ambush him away from his lair.

C6. DRAGON'S LAIR, TAKE TWO (EL 13)

Hinterbite's lair lies beyond the long corridor leading away from the lair of his brood. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs approach.

> The still air in this vast cavern smells thickly of bleach and weak acid. The ice coating every surface is old and gray, rife with cracks and thick rimes of frost. A carpet of tiny, sharp ridges and spikes of snow and frozen blood cover the stone floor, providing a surprisingly firm footing.
>
> From the floor on the far side of the cavern, a massive form rises from a curled position. Its draconic body is the size of an elephant, and its scales are a mixture of gray and light blue. The creature raises a pair of wings that look like long spans of hide and spiked barbs, and its hooked beak and neck ridge glisten like frozen blades. Mist rolls off the dragon's scales, and jets of fog fire from its nostrils. Lodged in its breastbone is a glittering golden rod. The creature stands confidently, and the malicious gleam in its ice-blue eyes gives mute assurance that it feels ready to meet any challenge.

Like his four children, Hinterbite is an EL 13 encounter. Thus, a group of 12th-level characters that charges in without a plan is likely to be overmatched.

Creatures: This chamber is the lair of Hinterbite, the white dragon that has been Icenvale's nemesis for hundreds of years. Icenvale's *rod of rulership* is embedded in his hide, smack in the center of his chest, and removing it requires a DC 24 Strength check. Thus, even if a character manages to sneak up on Hinterbite, the dragon is immediately aware of any effort to remove the rod.

Hinterbite may know about the PCs well before they arrive here. Thaddeus arrived to warn the dragon about the PCs right after they left town, using a magic item to teleport to the gate and then walking into the lair. Unless the PCs made very good time getting here, he has already left by the time they reach Hinterbite's lair. If one of the young dragons has fled here, Hinterbite has even more exact knowledge of the PCs' position and relative power.

Hinterbite: Male mature adult white dragon fighter 1; CR 13; Huge dragon (cold); HD 21d12+126 plus 1d10+6; hp 273; Init +2; Spd 60 ft., burrow 30 ft., swim 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor); AC 30, touch 10, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +22; Grp +44; Atk +30 melee (2d8+10/19–20, bite); Full Atk +30 melee (2d8+10/19–20, bite) and +28 melee (2d6+5, 2 claws) and +28 melee (1d8+5, 2 wings) and +28 melee (2d6+15, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with bite); SA breath weapon (50-ft. cone of cold), crush 2d8+15, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 120 ft., ice-walking, immunities (cold, paralysis, sleep), low-light vision, spell resistance 20, vulnerability to fire; AL CE; SV Fort +21, Ref +15, Will +16; Str 31, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +12, Diplomacy +6, Hide +6, Intimidate +20, Jump +22, Knowledge (history) +12, Listen +25, Move Silently +14, Search +18,

Sense Motive +26, Spot +19, Swim +18; Ability Focus (breath weapon), Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Grapple, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Suppress Weakness*.

Breath Weapon (Su): 50-foot cone, damage 7d6 cold, Reflex DC 28 half.

Crush (Ex): Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponent takes 2d8+15 points of bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 26 Reflex save or be pinned; grapple bonus +44.

Frightful Presence (Ex): 210-ft. radius, 20 or fewer HD, Will DC 22 negates.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*fog cloud, gust of wind* (DC 14). Caster level 7th.

Spells: Hinterbite casts spells as a 3rd-level sorcerer.

Icewalking (Ex): As the *spider climb* spell, but the surfaces Hinterbite climbs must be icy. This ability is always in effect.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/6 per day; caster level 3rd): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*mage armor, shield, true strike.*

*New feat from *Draconomicon*.

Tactics: Hinterbite is a fairly simple creature as dragons go. From his point of view, anyone he doesn't recognize who gets far enough into Karrack to encounter him obviously constitutes a threat. Thus, he attacks strangers on sight.

If the intruders refrain from attacking and ask for parley, he is skeptical. Any effort to negotiate must seem sincere, and Hinterbite has a high enough Sense Motive bonus to avoid most false ploys. He insists that any discussions occur on terms that give him an advantage—for example, he may require that all creatures he senses be present, visible, and facing away from him during the conversation.

In combat, Hinterbite doesn't use his breath weapon unless he can catch multiple targets within its area, or he can't get into melee range for some reason. Even then, he may choose to cast a spell instead (see below). Hinterbite is much more dangerous in close combat than at range, and he knows it. If possible, he keeps spellcasters (especially healers) within the extended reach of his bite attack so that their casting provokes attacks of opportunity. Because he is extremely accurate in combat, he normally uses Power Attack, decreasing his attack bonus by –5 and increasing his damage bonus by +5. If he continues to hit his foes without difficulty, he increases the amount dedicated to Power Attack by a few points until he begins to miss with at least a few attacks each round.

Hinterbite prefers to slay a single foe rather than wound several, so he focuses his attacks on the target that seems most dangerous after a round or two of combat. He does not allow himself to be flanked if he can avoid it, but he doesn't risk an attack of opportunity to do so. In most cases, he can prevent a nimble foe from flanking him simply by grappling it. Hinterbite normally grapples only one foe at a time, and he likes to save that tactic for creatures that attempt to flank him, though he may also use it to neutralize a spellcaster if no other target presents itself. Hinterbite is never willing to lose his Dexterity bonus or ability to threaten, so he uses only part of his body in a grapple, taking a –20 penalty on the grapple check to avoid the negative consequences (see Improved Grab on page 310 of the *Monster Manual*).

Hinterbite uses his few spells to his advantage if he sees the opportunity to do so. He doesn't forgo the opportunity to attack a foe in melee in order to cast a spell, but he takes the time to boost his defenses magically if he has a chance to prepare spells in advance, or if he can't reach a target and isn't threatened. Both *mage armor* and *shield* boost his AC, but he prefers *mage armor* if he's casting before a combat, and *shield* during a combat if an arcane spellcaster is present. If both spells are already running, he uses *true strike,* and then bites using Power Attack, taking a full –20 penalty on his attack roll to gain a +20 bonus on his damage roll. This tactic negates the *true strike* attack bonus but increases his bite damage significantly.

Once intruders have attacked Hinterbite, he's unlikely to let them go. Thus, PCs may have considerable difficulty escaping from him if they get into trouble. On the other hand, however, his penchant for finishing a battle once it has begun may make it easier for a cunning group to lure him into a trap.

Treasure: Hinterbite has accumulated a considerable hoard from his raiding as well as the tribute that Thaddeus brings him every few months. The cavern is filled with frozen carcasses, foodstuffs, and treasure. Most of the food is in crates and barrels bearing the stamp of the Guild Council, and some is in Bardic Guild market containers. Thaddeus never worried about hiding his influence here, assuming (rightly so far) that Hinterbite would kill any trespassers who might find the crates.

In addition to the *minor ring of energy resistance (fire)* that Hinterbite wears (worth 12,000 gp) and the *rod of rulership* (50 minutes remaining, worth 6,000 gp) that is embedded in his hide, his hoard includes 1,147 pp, 9,362 gp, eight diamonds (worth 125 gp each), a *staff of fire* (10 charges, worth 3,550 gp), and a *glove of storing* (worth 10,000 gp). All the items that Hinterbite does not have on his body are buried in the ice at the back of the cavern (see text description).

Development: A group that attacks Hinterbite and flees without slaying him has made a terrible enemy. The dragon will make every effort to track them down and settle the score, even if it takes him years to do so.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs return the *rod of rulership* to Orielle, she immediately becomes Baroness of Icenvale. A celebration is held to commemorate the occasion within the week. Her people are thrilled with the re-establishment of the ruler, and Icenvale thrives under her leadership.

If the PCs slay Hinterbite but do not return the rod, Orielle eventually manages to convince the citizens of Icenvale to convert the old barony into a republic. She is elected chief minister in charge of the new government, and she leads Icenvale with courage and wisdom.

In either case, Thaddeus tries to make the best of a bad situation, supporting Orielle in word if not in action. If the PCs confront him about the Guild goods stashed in Hinterbite's cave, he claims they were stolen from caravans. If the PCs seem unconvinced by his story, he flees if he can, then works against both Orielle and the PCs in the weeks to come.

If the PCs fail utterly in their quest, or if they go out of their way to help Thaddeus keep control, the Guild Council retains power in Icenvale until new heroes come along.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If Orielle gains power in Icenvale, she may wish to establish a stronger military hold on the surrounding wilderness, especially Karrack. Though the PCs have presumably cleared the fortress of dragons, it's too useful a fortification to stand empty for long. If some ally of Icenvale doesn't move into it, an opposed force—quite possibly Ulf and Yeager's clan of frost giants—is likely to do so. Since she can ill afford to commit any of the barony's forces to defending an outlying fortress, Orielle may offer the castle to the PCs to use as a base of operations. She wishes no payment from them—only their promise not to let the fortress fall into enemy hands, and to come to the barony's defense in times of trouble.

If Thaddeus ends up in charge, he makes the same offer, except that he does want the PCs to purchase Karrack, or at least pay taxes on it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a Game Designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. He has author and co-author credits on numerous Star Wars, d20 MODERN, and *EverQuest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.